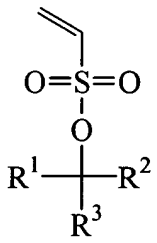
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

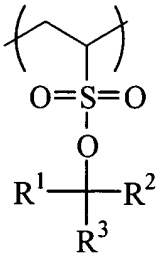
1. (Previously presented) A sulfonate compound having the following general formula (1):



(1)

wherein R^1 to R^3 each are fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^1 to R^3 contains fluorine, R^1 and R^2, R^1 and R^3, or R^2 and R^3, taken together, may form a ring, each of R^1 to R^3 is a straight or branched alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, preferably 1 to 10 carbon atoms, when they form a ring.

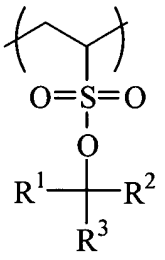
2. (Currently Amended) A polymer comprising recurring units of the following general formula (2) and having a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 500,000,



(2)

wherein R^1 to R^3 each are ~~hydrogen,~~ fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^1 to R^3 contains fluorine, R^1 and R^2, R^1 and R^3, or R^2 and R^3, taken together, may form a ring, each of R^1 to R^3 is a straight or branched alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, preferably 1 to 10 carbon atoms, when they form a ring.

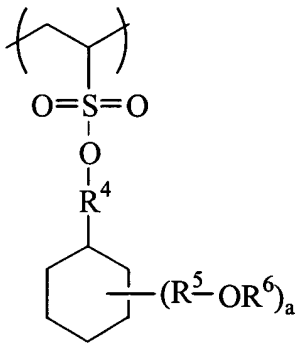
3. (Currently Amended) A polymer comprising recurring units of the following general formula (2) and recurring units of at least one type selected from the following general formulae (3a) to (3f) and having a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 500,000,



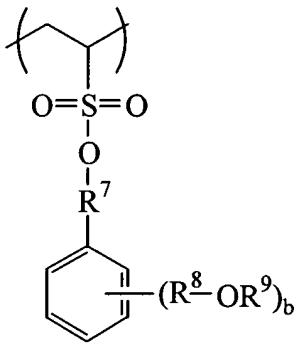
(2)

wherein R^1 to R^3 each are fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^1 to R^3 contains fluorine, R^1 and R^2, R^1 and R^3, or R^2 and R^3, taken together, may form a ring, each of R^1 to R^3 is a straight or branched alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, preferably 1 to 10 carbon atoms, when they form a ring,

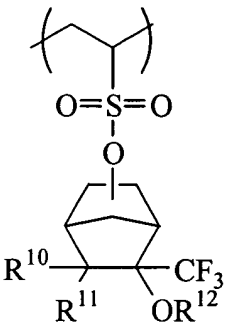
~~The polymer of claim 2, further comprising recurring units of at least one type selected from the following general formulae (3a) to (3f):~~



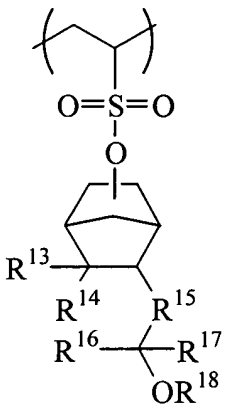
(3a)



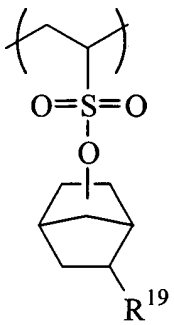
(3b)



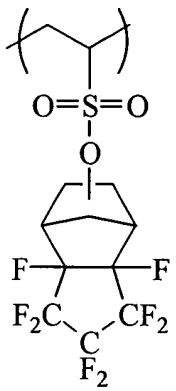
(3c)



(3d)



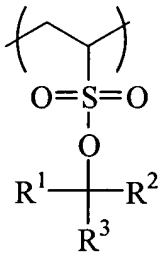
(3e)



(3f)

wherein R^4, R^5, R^7, R^8 and R^{15} each are a single bond or a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, R^6, R^9, R^{12} and R^{18} each are hydrogen or an acid labile group, R^{10}, R^{11}, R^{13}, R^{14}, R^{16} and R^{17} each are hydrogen, fluorine, a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^{16} and R^{17} contains at least one fluorine atom, R^{19} is a straight, branched or cyclic fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, "a" and "b" each are 1 or 2.

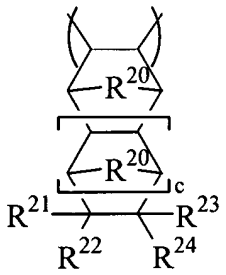
4. (Currently Amended) A polymer comprising recurring units of the following general formula (2) and recurring units of the following general formula (4) and having a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 500,000,



(2)

wherein R^1 to R^3 each are fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^1 to R^3 contains fluorine, R^1 and R^2, R^1 and R^3, or R^2 and R^3, taken together, may form a ring, each of R^1 to R^3 is a straight or branched alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, preferably 1 to 10 carbon atoms, when they form a ring,

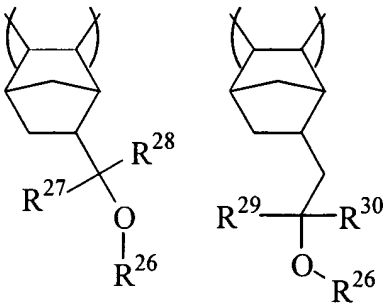
~~The polymer of claim 2, further comprising recurring units of the following general formula (4):~~



(4)

wherein R^{20} is a methylene group, oxygen atom or sulfur atom, R^{21} to R^{24} each are hydrogen, fluorine, $-R^{25}-OR^{26}$, $-R^{25}-CO_2R^{26}$ or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^{21} to R^{24} containing $-R^{25}-OR^{26}$ or $-R^{25}-CO_2R^{26}$, R^{25} is a single bond or a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, R^{26} is hydrogen, an acid labile group, adhesive group or a straight, branched or cyclic fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms which may contain a hydrophilic group such as hydroxyl, and c is 0 or 1.

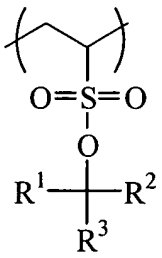
5. (Original) The polymer of claim 4 wherein said recurring units of formula (4) have a structure of the following general formula (4a) or (4b):



(4a) (4b)

wherein R^{26} is as defined above, R^{27} to R^{30} each are hydrogen, fluorine or an alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, at least either one of R^{27} and R^{28} contains at least one fluorine atom, and at least either one of R^{29} and R^{30} contains at least one fluorine atom.

6. (Currently Amended) A polymer comprising recurring units of the following general formula (2) and recurring units of at the following general formula (5) and having a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 500,000,



(2)

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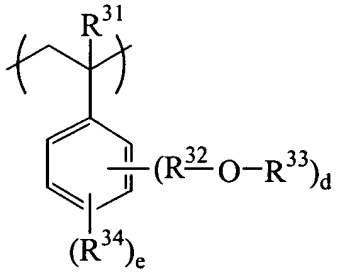
wherein R^1 to R^3 each are fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^1 to R^3 contains fluorine, R^1 and R^2, R^1 and R^3, or R^2 and R^3, taken together, may form a ring, each of R^1 to R^3 is a straight or branched

alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, preferably 1 to 10 carbon atoms, when they form a ring,

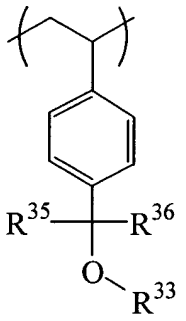
~~The polymer of claim 2, further comprising recurring units of the following general formula (5):~~



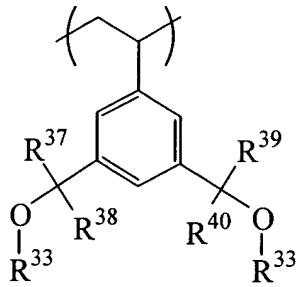
(5)

wherein R^{31} is hydrogen, fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, R^{32} is a single bond or a straight, branched or cyclic alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, R^{33} is hydrogen or an acid labile group, R^{34} is fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, d is 1 or 2, and e is an integer of 0 to 4, satisfying $1 \leq d+e \leq 5$.

7. (Original) The polymer of claim 6 wherein the recurring units of formula (5) have the following formula (5a) or (5b):



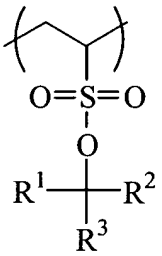
(5a)



(5b)

wherein R^{33} is as defined above, R^{35} to R^{40} each are hydrogen, fluorine or an alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, at least either one of R^{35} and R^{36} contains at least one fluorine atom, at least either one of R^{37} and R^{38} contains at least one fluorine atom, and at least either one of R^{39} and R^{40} contains at least one fluorine atom.

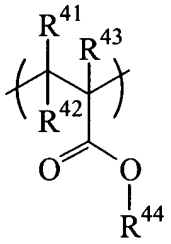
8. (Currently Amended) A polymer comprising recurring units of the following general formula (2) and recurring units of the following general formula (6) and having a weight average molecular weight of 1,000 to 500,000,



(2)

wherein R^1 to R^3 each are fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, at least one of R^1 to R^3 contains fluorine, R^1 and R^2, R^1 and R^3, or R^2 and R^3, taken together, may form a ring, each of R^1 to R^3 is a straight or branched alkylene or fluorinated alkylene group of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, preferably 1 to 10 carbon atoms, when they form a ring,

~~The polymer of claim 2, further comprising recurring units of the following general formula (6):~~



(6)

wherein R^{41} to R^{43} each are hydrogen, fluorine or a straight, branched or cyclic alkyl or fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms, and R^{44} is hydrogen, an acid labile group, an adhesive group or a straight, branched or cyclic fluorinated alkyl group of 1 to 20 carbon atoms which may contain a hydrophilic group such as hydroxyl.

9. (Original) The polymer of claim 8 wherein R^{43} in formula (6) is trifluoromethyl.

10. (Original) A resist composition comprising the polymer of claim 2.

11. (Original) A chemically amplified positive resist composition comprising

(A) the polymer of claim 2,

(B) an organic solvent, and

(C) a photoacid generator.

12. (Original) The resist composition of claim 11, further comprising (D) a basic compound.

13. (Original) The resist composition of claim 11, further comprising (E) a dissolution inhibitor.

14. (Original) A process for forming a resist pattern comprising the steps of:

applying the resist composition of claim 10 onto a substrate to form a coating,

heat treating the coating and then exposing it to high-energy radiation in a wavelength band of 100 to 180 nm or 1 to 30 nm through a photomask, and

optionally heat treating the exposed coating and developing it with a developer.

15. (Original) The pattern forming process of claim 14 wherein the high-energy radiation is an F_2 laser beam, Ar_2 laser beam or soft x-ray.

16. (Previously presented) A chemically amplified positive resist composition comprising

(A) the polymer of claim 3,

(B) an organic solvent, and

(C) a photoacid generator.

17. (Previously presented) A chemically amplified positive resist composition comprising

(A) the polymer of claim 4,

(B) an organic solvent, and

(C) a photoacid generator.

18. (Previously presented) A chemically amplified positive resist composition comprising

(A) the polymer of claim 6,

(B) an organic solvent, and

(C) a photoacid generator.

19. (Previously presented) A chemically amplified positive resist composition comprising

(A) the polymer of claim 8,

(B) an organic solvent, and

(C) a photoacid generator.